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Trump's potential indictment caps decades of legal scrutiny



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Former President Donald J. Trump smiles as he poses for a photo at the NCAA Wrestling Championships, Saturday, March 18, 2023, in Tulsa, Okla.

Associated Press



Respected historian
Mr. Dufi Kock
opens the cultural
manifestation
honoring National
Hymn and Flag Day

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Trump's potential indictment caps decades of legal scrutiny

By JILL COLVIN

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — For 40 years, former President Donald Trump has navigated countless legal investigations without ever facing criminal charges. That record may soon come to an end.

Trump could be indicted by a Manhattan grand jury as soon as this week, potentially charged with falsifying business records connected to hush money payments during his 2016 campaign to women who accused him of sexual encounters.

It's one of several investigations that have intensified as Trump mounts his third presidential run. He has denied any allegations of wrongdoing and accuses prosecutors of engaging in a politically motivated "witch hunt" to damage his campaign.

An indictment in New York would mark an extraordinary turn in American history, making Trump the first former president to face a criminal charge. And it would carry tremendous weight for Trump himself, threatening his long-established ability to avoid consequences despite entanglement in a dizzying number of cases.

Indictment, says biographer Michael D'Antonio, would be a "shocking event, both because of the fact that a former president is being indicted for the first time, but also because one of the slipperiest people at the highest level of business, whose devotion to abusing the system is so well established, is being caught."

"Throughout his life, he has done things for which he could have been investigated and potentially pros-



A police officer places a barricade in front of Trump Tower, on Tuesday, March 21, 2023, in New York.

ecuted and learned from those experiences that he could act with impunity," he said.

Trump first faced legal scrutiny in the 1970s when the Department of Justice brought a racial discrimination case against his family's real estate business.

Trump and his father fiercely fought the suit, which accused them of refusing to rent apartments to black tenants in predominantly white buildings. Testimony showed that applications filed by prospective black tenants were marked with a "C" for "colored." Trump counter-sued for \$100 million, accusing the government of defamation.

The case ended with a settlement that opened the way for some black tenants but did not force the Trumps to explicitly acknowledge they had "failed and neglected" to comply with the Fair Housing Act.

Since then, Trump and his businesses have been the

subject of thousands of civil lawsuits and numerous investigations. There have been probes into his casino and real estate dealings, allegations of bribery and improper lobbying, fraud allegations against the now-defunct Trump University and charitable Trump Foundation and a probe by the Manhattan district attorney into sales at the Trump SoHo hotel-condominium in Lower Manhattan.

Indeed, according to Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, a government watchdog group abbreviated CREW, as of November 2022, Trump had been accused of committing at least 56 criminal offenses since he launched his campaign in 2015, not including allegations of fraudulent business dealings. But he has never been formally indicted.

Trump is a master of delay tactics, "finding ways to endlessly delay in the hopes that the investigation and litigation will go away. And he's had remarkable success," says CREW president Noah Bookbinder, a former federal corruption prosecutor.

"It makes accountability absolutely essential because we can't have people in a functioning democracy operating in positions of power with total

impunity where they can commit crimes and never have to face any consequences," he said.

Trump's retort to such strong talk: He commits no crimes, so consequences would themselves be unjust.

As president, Trump continued to face legal scrutiny. For two years, the Justice Department investigated his 2016 campaign's ties to Russia. While special counsel Robert Mueller never found direct evidence of collusion, his final report did lay out evidence for obstruction. He noted that, because of a department opinion that bars indicting a sitting president, he couldn't recommend Trump be criminally charged, even in secret.

Since Trump left office, the investigations have circled ever closer.

In January, his namesake company was fined \$1.6 million for tax crimes, including conspiracy and falsifying business records. The company's longtime executive, Allen Weisselberg, is currently serving jail time as punishment for dodging taxes on job perks.

Additional cases are still being pursued. In Georgia, Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis has been investigating whether Trump and his allies illegally meddled in the 2020 election. The foreperson of a special

grand jury, which heard from dozens of witnesses, said last month that the panel had recommended that numerous people be indicted, and hinted Trump could be among them. It is ultimately up to Willis to decide whether to move forward.

In Washington, Trump is under scrutiny from special counsel Jack Smith for his handling — allegations say mishandling — of classified documents after leaving office, as well as for his much-publicized efforts to stay in power, despite his 2020 election loss. Justice Department lawyers in the documents probe have said they have amassed evidence of potential crimes involving Trump's retention of national defense information as well as potential efforts to obstruct their work.

Some legal experts have questioned the wisdom of having the Manhattan case be the first brought against Trump, when more serious charges could be looming. Trump is expected to be charged with falsifying business records, a misdemeanor unless prosecutors can prove it was done to conceal another crime. The case involves payments made by Trump's former lawyer, Michael Cohen, who served prison time after pleading guilty in 2018 to federal charges, to porn actor Stormy Daniels and model Karen McDougal. Cohen was reimbursed by Trump, whose company logged the reimbursements as "legal expenses."

Politically, Trump allies believe the case actually will benefit the former president in the short term by energizing his base in a competitive Republican primary, and would provide another boost later on if it ultimately fails to yield a conviction.

"The prosecutor in New York has done more to help Donald Trump get elected," says Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-South Carolina, echoing other GOP officials, who have also argued the probe will likely help Trump in the short term. □

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States cranking out even more tax cuts amid cash surpluses

By **DAVID A. LIEB**

Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP)

— Just six months after passing what was billed as the largest tax cut in Missouri history, the Republican-led state House voted Tuesday for an even bigger income tax cut that could return over \$1 billion annually to individuals, corporations and retirees.

The Missouri legislation is the latest in a series of aggressive tax reductions that swept across U.S. states last year and have continued into 2023 — even as some warn that it might be wise for states to hold on to record large surpluses amid economic uncertainty.

“Wouldn’t it be a good idea for us to all just pause for a year?” Democratic state Rep. Deb Lavender asked rhetorically before her Republican colleagues endorsed the tax cut on a 109-45 party-line vote.

The Missouri legislation still has a ways to go — it needs a second House approval before it can move to the Senate and then to the governor. But legislatures and governors in several states already have given final approval to tax cuts and rebates in the first few months of this year. In some states, those tax breaks have been pushed by Republicans, but in others by Democrats.

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican, signed legislation Tuesday that will lower the state’s sales tax for a four-year period, though she had originally wanted the GOP-led Legislature to eliminate the sales tax on groceries.

In Montana, Republican Gov. Greg Gianforte last week signed a \$1 billion package of bills passed by the GOP-led Legislature that will provide both income and property tax rebates, reduce the top income tax rate and increase income tax credits for lower-income working families.

In Michigan, Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed a bill passed by the Democratic-led Legislature that provides tax relief to

retirees and to lower-income families.

And in West Virginia, Republican Gov. Jim Justice signed a measure passed by the GOP-led Legislature that reduces the income tax rate while also enlarging an income tax credit to offset personal property taxes paid on vehicles. The tax cut package is expected to return more than two-thirds of the state’s record \$1.1 billion surplus to taxpayers, as opposed to spending it on state programs.

Nationwide, states’ total financial balances reached a record \$343 billion at the end of their 2022 fiscal years — up 42% from the previous year, according to a recent report by The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Two-thirds of states approved some sort of tax relief last year, according to an analysis by The Associated Press.

Those surplus-induced tax breaks were enabled by stronger than expected state tax collections and an influx of federal pandemic aid both directly to states and to businesses and individuals that, in turn, injected more spending into the economy. But those federal payments are winding down, inflation remains persistently high and new challenges in the banking sector have raised questions about the overall economy.

“This extraordinary chapter in state finances appears to be coming to an end,” said Justin Theal, an officer with Pew’s State Fiscal Policy Project.

“Tax cuts or new spending initiatives aren’t inherently bad or uncommon during good budgetary times,” Theal said. But “if policymakers aren’t careful, these long-term commitments can place them in a more vulnerable fiscal position when the economy inevitably turns.”

In Missouri, some Republican lawmakers argued that more tax cuts ultimately would give residents more money to spend and lead to continued growth in state tax revenues.

Last October, Republican Gov. Mike Parson signed legislation cutting the top individual income tax rate from 5.3% to 4.95% effective Jan. 1 and allowing for an eventual reduction to 4.5% if revenues continue to grow. This year’s bill doesn’t wait to see whether that growth occurs. Instead, it would cut the individual income tax rate to 4.5% beginning in 2024 while also reducing taxes on corporations and Social Security benefits and enabling even more income tax cuts if future revenue targets are met.

Other states also are following last year’s tax breaks with even more this year. Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear, a Democrat up for re-election this year, signed



Members of the Missouri House debate legislation cutting state income taxes on Tuesday, March 21, 2023, at the state Capitol in Jefferson City, Mo.

Associated Press

a plan passed by the Republican-led Legislature to cut the state’s individual income tax rate to 4% effective in 2024. That comes

on the heels of a tax overhaul passed last year, which lowered the income tax rate from 5% to 4.5% in January. □



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Apaches tell court copper mine would harm sacred sites

By ANITA SNOW

Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — A Native American group that's trying to stop an effort to build one of the largest copper mines in the United States told a full federal appeals court panel Tuesday that the project would prevent Apaches from exercising their religion by destroying land they consider sacred. U.S. federal government plans for a land swap that will allow Resolution Copper to build the mine will destroy the land in eastern Arizona known as Oak Flat, "barring the Apaches from ever accessing it again and ending their core religious practices forever," said attorney Luke Goodrich, arguing for the group Apache Stronghold.

"We asked the court today to recognize the obvious — that when the government destroys a sacred site, religious liberty law has something to say about it," Goodrich, vice president and senior counsel at the nonprofit legal institution Becket Law, said in a prepared statement distributed after the hearing in Pasadena, California. "A win for Apache Stronghold will be a win for people of all faiths."

The Apache group is seeking to halt the land swap while the case plays out in court.

The panel of 11 judges on the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals is expected to is-



Tribal councilman Wendsler Nosie Sr. speaks with Apache activists during a rally to save Oak Flat, land near Superior, Ariz., sacred to Western Apache tribes, in front of the U.S. Capitol on July 22, 2015, in Washington.

sue a decision in the next few months.

Apache Stronghold sued the U.S. government under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to protect the place tribal members call Chi'chil Bildagoteel, an area dotted with ancient oak groves and traditional plants the Apaches consider essential to their religion. An environmental impact survey for the project has been pulled back while the U.S. Department of Agriculture has consulted for months with Native American tribes and others about their concerns.

But U.S. government attorney Joan Pepin told the judge Tuesday that the

Forest Service expected the environmental analysis could be republished as early as this spring, setting in motion the land swap, which would have to be completed within 60 days. Pepin argued that the act of Congress that approved the exchange giving the Oak Flat to Resolution Copper land supersedes the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which prevents government agencies from placing a "substantial burden" on the practice of religion.

The land transfer was a last-minute provision included in a must-pass defense bill in 2014. The swap would give the mining company 3.75

square miles (9.71 square kilometers) of national forest land in exchange for eight parcels it owns in other parts of Arizona.

Resolution Copper, a joint venture of global mining firms Rio Tinto and BHP, has said it continues to address concerns raised about the project, but noted there is significant local support for the mine. Rio Tinto has headquarters in Australia and the U.K, while BHP is based in Australia.

It says the project has the potential to supply enough copper to meet up to one-quarter of U.S. demand, adding up to \$1 billion a year to Arizona's economy and creating thousands of

local jobs.

A smaller 9th Circuit panel previously ruled 2-1 that the federal government could give the Oak Flat land to the mining company for the project. The court later agreed to let the larger panel hear the case.

Apache Stronghold members traveled from Arizona for the hearing, stopping at cities along the way to draw attention to the case. They gathered Monday at a community arts center in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Boyle Heights.

"Oak Flat is where my people have come to connect with our Creator for millennia, and we have the right to continue that sacred tradition," Wendsler Nosie Sr. of Apache Stronghold said in a statement released after the hearing. "Today we stood up in court for that right, determined to stop those who think that our place of worship can be treated differently simply because it lacks four walls and a steeple."

The Poor People's Campaign, environmental groups and the National Congress of American Indians are among many groups backing Apache Stronghold's fight.

The Notre Dame Law School Religious Liberty Clinic filed a "friend of the court" brief and Stephanie Barclay, director of Notre Dame's Religious Liberty Initiative, participated in oral arguments. □

Associated Press



A motorist is silhouetted against the setting sun on the eve of the vernal equinox, Sunday, March 19, 2023, in Shawnee, Kan.

Associated Press

By MADDIE BURAKOFF
AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Spring has sprung!

It's the first day of spring: Here's what that really means

Monday marked the spring equinox — at least for those in the Northern Hemisphere. But what does that actually mean?

WHAT IS THE SPRING EQUINOX?

As the Earth travels around the sun, it does so at an angle.

For most of the year, the Earth's axis is tilted either toward or away from the sun. That means the sun's warmth and light fall unequally on the northern and southern halves of the

planet.

During the equinox, the Earth's axis and its orbit line up so that both hemispheres get an equal amount of sunlight.

The word equinox comes from two Latin words meaning equal and night. That's because on the equinox, day and night last almost the same amount of time — though one may get a few extra minutes, depending on where you are on the planet.

The spring — or vernal —

equinox can land on March 19, 20 or 21, depending on the year. This year it landed on Monday at 5:24 p.m. Eastern time.

WHY ARE THERE TWO KINDS OF SPRINGS?

There are two different ways to carve up the year: Meteorological and astronomical seasons.

Meteorological seasons are defined by the weather. They break down the year into three-month seasons based on annual temperature cycles. □

Israel repeals 2005 act on West Bank settlement pullout

By ILAN BEN ZION

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli lawmakers on Tuesday repealed a 2005 act that saw four Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank dismantled at the same time as Israeli forces withdrew from the Gaza Strip. The development could pave the way for an official return to the abandoned West Bank areas in another setback to Palestinian hopes for statehood.

It was the latest move by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right government, which is dominated by settler leaders and allies, to promote settlement expansion in the territory, inflaming tensions with the Palestinians and the international community.

The move drew a sharp rebuke from Israel's closest ally, the United States. Most of the international community considers settlements illegal and opposes construction on occupied territories claimed by the Palestinians for a future independent state. The State Department said it was "extremely troubled" and urged Israel to refrain from allowing settlers to return to the outposts.

"Coming at a time of heightened tensions, the legislative changes announced today are provocative and counterproductive to efforts to restore some measures of calm," said State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel.

Angry condemnation also poured in on Tuesday from the U.S. and several other countries over the of latest in a string of incendiary comments about the Palestinians by Israel's ultranationalist finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich. Earlier this week, Smotrich claimed there is "no such thing" as Palestinians, sparking widespread outrage.

Israel evacuated the four settlements and unilaterally pulled out of Gaza under the 2005 legislation. The prime minister at the time, Ariel Sharon, argued that Israel would not be able to keep the settlements under a future agreement with



A Palestinian youth holds a national flag next to a water tank in the former Israeli settlement of Homesh settlement near the West Bank city of Jenin, Thursday, Oct. 3, 2013.

Associated Press

the Palestinians.

Since then, Israeli citizens have been officially banned from returning to those locations, though the Israeli military has allowed activists to visit and pray there — a ban that has now been revoked.

Netanyahu's government has put settlement expansion at the top of its agenda and has already advanced thousands of new settlement housing units and retroactively authorized nine wildcat outposts in the West Bank.

This week, Israel pledged to put a temporary freeze on further settlement approvals, including authorization of outposts, as part of a series of measures meant to ease tensions ahead of the sensitive period that includes the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and the Jewish festival of Passover.

Still, ultranationalist members of Netanyahu's coalition pushed for a repeal of the ban on the northern West Bank settlements. The legislation passed in an overnight vote 31-18 in the 120-seat Knesset. The remaining lawmakers did not vote.

Itamar Ben-Gvir, an ultranationalist West Bank settler now serving as minister in charge of police, said Tuesday that the repeal of the ban corrects "a historic

injustice" and pledged to continue boosting settlements.

The Palestinians seek the West Bank and Gaza Strip as an independent state, with east Jerusalem as its capital. Israel captured those territories in the 1967 Mideast war. Since then, more than 700,000 Israelis have moved into dozens of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem — which most of the world considers an obstacle to peace.

The vote came as Netanyahu's government is pushing ahead with a separate plan to overhaul the country's judicial system that has roiled Israeli politics. Netanyahu's allies claim the courts have too much power in the legislative process and that the Supreme Court is biased against settlers. Critics say the overhaul would upend the country's delicate system of checks and balances and push Israel toward authoritarianism. They also say Netanyahu could find an escape route from his corruption trial through the overhaul.

The political crisis has divided the country and extended to the military, Israel's most trusted institution, where many reservists have pledged not to show up for duty under what they see as impending regime

change. On Tuesday, protest leaders escalated their calls for troops to refuse to serve in the military reserve on which Israel's army relies. "It's a very hard day for us today, and our voices are shaking because we want to take our battle against the government one step forward," said Lt. Col. Ron Sharf, a volunteer reservist. "Our government wants unlimited power."

The threat of losing military personnel, particularly as tensions surge in the occupied West Bank, has sparked concern and condemnation. Netanyahu on Tuesday visited a military recruitment center in central Israel and appeared to warn new conscripts against joining the protests. "We have no country without soldiers who are willing, recruited for service," he said.

As the government faces mass protests over the judicial overhaul, documents leaked Tuesday show top finance ministry officials expressing concern that efforts to curb the Supreme Court's independence could damage Israel's economy, making the country less attractive to foreign investors and driving down its credit ratings. Smotrich responded defiantly to the reports, seeking to assure the public that the judicial overhaul would

not endanger the country's prosperity.

"I am convinced that the reform will offer great opportunities for the Israeli economy," he said. "Citizens, be calm, you are in good and professional hands."

Tuesday's repeal comes against the backdrop of the worst Israeli-Palestinian fighting in recent years and as concerns grow of intensified violence during Ramadan, which will begin on Thursday.

Israeli forces have carried out almost nightly arrest raids across the occupied West Bank over the past year. The incursions began after a string of deadly attacks in Israel last spring and have provoked a fierce response from Palestinians.

So far this year, 85 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire, and Palestinian attackers have killed 15 Israelis, according to a tally by The Associated Press.

Israel says most of the Palestinians killed have been militants. But stone-throwing youths protesting the incursions and people not involved in the confrontations have also been killed. All but one of the Israelis killed were civilians.

On Tuesday, the U.S., France, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates joined mounting criticism of Smotrich's remarks earlier this week denying the existence of the Palestinian people.

"There is no such thing as a Palestinian nation. There is no Palestinian history. There is no Palestinian language," Smotrich said in a speech in Paris. French Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Anne-Claire Legendre lambasted his remarks as "infuriating and irresponsible."

"The U.S. remains committed to two states for two people, both of whom had deep ancient roots in the land," Patel said.

Saudi Arabia denounced what it called Smotrich's "offensive and racist statements," which it said "contribute to spreading hate speech and violence and undermine efforts for dialogue and international peace." □

Venezuela oil czar in surprise resignation amid graft probes

By REGINA GARCIA CANO

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)

— The man responsible for running Venezuela's oil industry — the one that pays for virtually everything in the troubled country, from subsidized food to ridiculously cheap gas — has quit amid investigations into alleged corruption among officials in various parts of the government.

Tareck El Aissami's announcement Monday was shocking on multiple counts. He was seen as a loyal ruling party member and considered a key figure in the government's efforts to evade punishing international economic sanctions.

And he led the state oil company PDVSA in a Venezuelan business sector widely considered to be corrupt — in a country where embezzlement, bribery, money laundering and other wrongdoing are a lifestyle.

"Obviously, they are giving it the patina of an anti-corruption probe," said Ryan Berg, director of the Americas program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington-based think tank.

"Rule of law is not being advanced here," Berg added. "This is really a chance for the regime to sideline someone that it felt for some reason was a danger to it in the moment and



Venezuelan Petroleum Minister Tareck El Aissami arrives at the 4F military museum where late President Hugo Chavez is buried, during the activities marking the 10th anniversary of Chavez's death, in Caracas, Venezuela, Wednesday, March 15, 2023.

to continue perpetuating acts of corruption once particular individuals have been forced out of the political scene."

Hours after El Aissami revealed his resignation on Twitter, President Nicolás Maduro called his government's fight against corruption "bitter" and "painful." He said he accepted the resignation "to facilitate all the investigations that should result in the establishment of the truth, the punishment of the culprits, and justice in all these cases." Venezuela's National Anti-Corruption Police last week announced an investiga-

tion into unidentified public officials in the oil industry, the justice system and some local governments. Attorney General Tarek William Saab in a radio interview Monday said that at least a half dozen officials, including people affiliated with PDVSA, had been arrested, and he expected more to be detained.

Among those arrested is Joselit Ramirez, a cryptocurrency regulator who was indicted in the U.S. along with El Aissami on money laundering charges in 2020. Corruption has long been rampant in Venezuela, which sits atop the world's

largest petroleum reserves. But officials are rarely held accountable — a major irritant to citizens, the majority of whom live on \$1.90 a day, the international benchmark of extreme poverty. "I assure you, even more so at this moment, when the country calls not only for justice but also for the strengthening of the institutions, we will apply the full weight of the law against these individuals," Saab said.

Oil is Venezuela's most important industry. A windfall of hundreds of billions in oil dollars thanks to record-high global prices allowed

the late President Hugo Chávez to launch numerous initiatives, including state-run food markets, new public housing, free health clinics and education programs.

But a subsequent drop in prices and government mismanagement, first under Chávez's government and then Maduro's, ended the lavish spending. And so began a complex crisis that has pushed millions into poverty and driven more than 7 million Venezuela to migrate.

PDVSA's mismanagement, and more recently economic sanctions imposed by the U.S., caused a steady production decline, going from the 3.5 million barrels a day when Chávez rose to power in 1999 to roughly 700,000 barrels a day last year.

David Smilde, a Tulane University professor who has conducted extensive research on Venezuela, said the moves by Maduro's government are more than just an effort to clean its image.

"Arresting important figures and accepting the resignation of one of the most powerful ministers in a case that involves \$3 billion does not improve your image," he said. "It is probably because the missing money actually has an important impact on a government with serious budgetary problems." □



A parent, carrying his child after picking him up from school, runs past police carrying out an operation against gangs in the Bel-Air area of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, March 3, 2023.

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)

— New clashes between gangs in Haiti's capital and

beyond have killed at least 187 people in less than two weeks and injured more

U.N.: Fresh gang violence in Haiti leaves 187 dead in 11 days

than 150 others, the U.N. said Tuesday.

The fresh wave of violence recorded from Feb. 27 to March 9 in the capital, Port-au-Prince, and in the central region of Artibonite also has displaced hundreds of people and forced farmers to abandon fields as starvation worsens, officials said.

"The situation is all the more alarming for children, who are often subjected to all forms of armed violence, including forced recruitment and sexual violence,"

the U.N. in Haiti said.

The surge of violence in central Haiti has been largely blamed on a gang called "Baz Gran Grif," which roughly translates to "Big Claw Crew."

In addition, nearly 260 kidnappings have been reported since the start of the year, with people abducted from their homes or public places, officials said. Gangs have grown more powerful since the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, and al-

ready control an estimated 60% of Port-au-Prince. They also have been clashing in the central towns of Petite Rivière de l'Artibonite, Verrettes, Estere and Liancourt. Prime Minister Ariel Henry signaled last week that he is seeking to mobilize Haiti's military to help an under-resourced and understaffed police department fight the unrelenting gang violence, which has forced an increasing number of schools and businesses to shutter. □

Respected historian Mr. Dufi Kock opens the cultural manifestation honoring National Hymn and Flag Day

(Oranjestad)—Last Saturday on the Plaza Betico Croes, the public enjoyed a beautiful cultural manifestation dedicated to our National Hymn and Flag Day. The official ceremony started with the entrance of our flag, which was carried by one of the island's most valuable historian, Mr. Adolf "Dufi" Kock. He was joined by 25 young gymnasts from Gihae Gymnastics that have recently won tournaments abroad representing Aruba.

Adolf "Dufi" Kock

Mr. Kock is an important historian for our country. Dufi has been one of the 3 people within the Dutch kingdom to receive the royal recognition of "Silver Carnation" from The Prince Bernhard Culture Fund, delivered personally by Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrix. Dufi was recognized for his valuable contribution to the Aruban culture. He had been a writer and historian for many years already, and has been dedi-

cating himself to investigating and documenting the history of our island nation, especially Aruba's role in the Second World War.

Dufi shares all his knowledge in his publications, and also helps young people whenever they are in need of more information, for example for a school presentation. As a demonstration of our appreciation for his hard work, Dufi had been asked to carry the Aruban flag to open the



cultural manifestation in honor of our patriotic identity.

Gihae Gymnastics

The athletes from Gihae Gymnastics have recently represented Aruba successfully during the Magical Classic Meet and the Presidential Classic Meet tournaments in the US, where they won various medals thanks to their dedication and discipline. As an honoring of their success, they have been asked to

accompany Mr. Kock and deliver the Aruban flag on stage at the plaza, thus officially commencing the celebrations.

Thanks

The minister of Culture, Mrs. Xiomara Maduro, expresses her gratitude to Mr. Kock and the athletes from Gihae Gymnastics for their great work in delivering the Aruban flag at the cultural manifestation dedicated to our national holiday. □

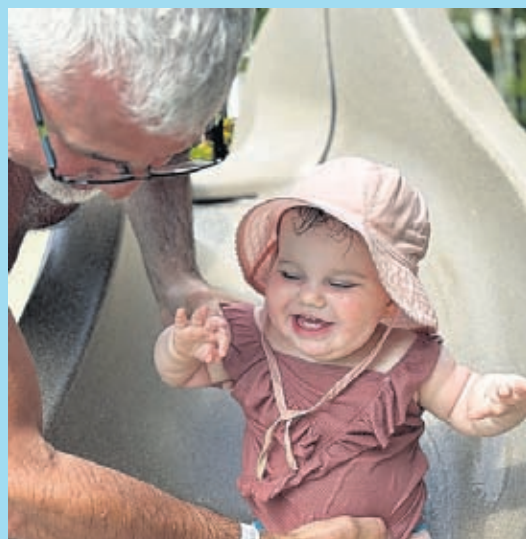
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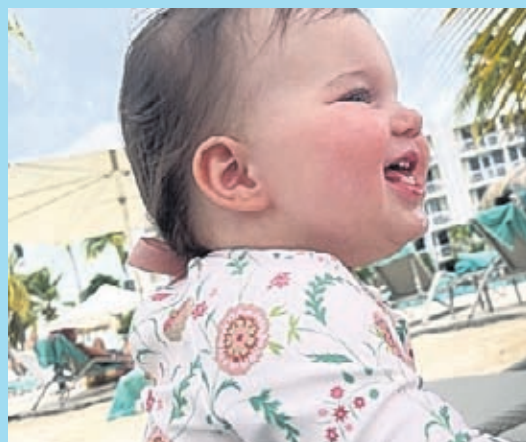
Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again. For today we received a lovely message from Ron and Nonnie Rubin from Boston, MA.

They wrote to us saying; Aruba to me is sharing the love of the island first with your children and then your grandchil-



dren! Margot's first time in Aruba!

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □



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With an elegant celebration and delicious lunch,

Alhambra Casino recognized its distinguished crew members for 2022

As every year, Alhambra Casino and Shops took the time to honor its distinguished crew members with a special celebration at the Alhambra Casino Ballroom, which included a delicious lunch and musical entertainment.

The event started with a lunch buffet consisting of delicious items to cater to every taste, including drinks and desserts. After the lunch the atmosphere was more energetic and cheerful and everyone was ready for the awards.

Susan Varnes, president and COO of Treasure Bay, LLC gave a speech in which she recognized the value of these distinguished crew members represent for the Alhambra family. She also talked about the challenges the team has faced and overcome, as well as plans for the future. Throughout the event a family atmosphere reigned making the celebration all the merrier.

Jan ten Have, director of operations also gave an inspirational speech and helped hand out the awards.

First, the crew members who have a perfect attendance were recognized. Varnes pointed out that sometimes crew members cannot have a perfect attendance in a year due to circumstances outside their control, and that is regrettable. However, it is important to recognize the effort of those receiving the Perfect Attendance award because it allows the entire team to depend on them and for the entire operation of Alhambra Casino to run smoothly. 42 people received the Perfect Attendance award during the ceremony.

Recognized for their perfect attendance for 2022 were:

Sandra Adamus, Shirley Adamus, Ricardo Arends, Mayra Cole, Michaud Daal, Sandra Dirks, Jaysell Dirks, Mirto Erasmus, Haydee Godoy, Jacqueline Goijla, Melinda Hassell, Richard Jacobs, Antonio Jermin, Omar Kelly, Raymond Kerpens, Javier Kock, Marina Kock, Alexander Krozendijk, Brunildo Kruythoff, Evan Levingston, Melia Lofstap, Nelson Lozano, Carlos Maduro, Jason Maduro, Kelvin Maduro, Edward Mansell, Albert Neuman, Maurys Odor, Jairo Paesch, Kenia Perez, Junior Rafini, Sylvester Rasmijn, Julissa Rijke, Roberto Schwengle, Lubeycha Trott, Calverina Tromp, Rudolph Vorst, Theodor Werleman, Roberto Wever, Nereida Whitfield, Lucia Willems and Maruska Wouters.

This was followed by a celebration of anniversaries, which celebrated crew members with five or more years of service. Seventeen people received the Anniversary Award in different categories.

Five years: Rebecca Stennett, Louela Christiaans, Michaud Daal, Walter Brokke, Ricardo Janga, Armando Kelly, Janine Ridderstap, Noraysa Had-docks, Fatima Paesch and Kim Pom.

Ten years: Ricardo Arends and Magdaline Werleman.

Fifteen years: Vinetty Coello and Pedro Erasmus.

Thirty five years: Raymond Kerpens, Lelia Croes and Wilbert Maduro.

This closed yet another beautiful ceremony and celebration for the Alhambra Casino and Shops. □



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Aruba Today is delighted to share to its readers a new segment called "Beauty and the Beach", where we take a minute to honor our guests who have decided to spend their vacation on our beautiful and warm island.

In this edition, we'd like to give a shout out to **Denise Gibson, Eric Gibson & friends from the US**. Fun fact: Denise was born on Aruba! Aruba is always proud to host all families and guests. We at Aruba Today encourage any visitor of the island to send in their pictures and/or messages; who knows? You might get on the cover!

Beauty & THE BEACH

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Article by Etnia Nativa

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Gothic Aruba

Destination values, native heritage, and cultural identity are what Etnia Nativa advocates for as its own particular way of safeguarding all reasons to love Aruba. Through this cultural blog, "Island-Insight," we share awareness, educate, and safeguard native heritage. It is how we encourage you to experiment with an island-keeper state of mind during your stay.

During this episode, we want to encourage you to discover a gothic work of art that you can admire in the Saint Anne Church located in the Noord district.

The high altar of St Anne's Church in Noord is an extraordinary handiwork of Gothic Revival (aka: Victorian Gothic, Gothic Revival). An architectural movement that began in the late 1840s in England gained momentum in the first half of the 19th century and expanded as increasingly serious and erudite admirers of Gothic Revival styles sought the best craftsmen to revive medieval Gothic architecture, with the intent to complement or even replace the prevailing neoclassical styles at the time.

The main altar of the Santa Ana church in Noord, which dates back to 1870, is a magnificent example of this style. Together with the communion rail and the pulpit, they make up an extraordinary work of art, carved from oak, and are the work of the Brabant sculptor Hendrik van der Geld.

Hendrik van der Geld (Elshout, 1838; Den Bosch, 1914) was a sculptor who studied at the Den Bosch and Antwerp art academies. Between 1870 and around 1910, he worked on the restoration of St. Jan in Den Bosch, for which he produced different altars, pulpits, a portal sculpture, and various statues of saints. His other works were often commissioned by the Bossche diocese. In Tilburg, Van der Geld made statues of saints

and Stations of the Cross for the old Korvel church and statues of saints for the Maria "kerk". Between 1878 and 1885, he made four statues of saints for the Heikese church. In 1881, he created the main altar in the Heuvelse Kerk and also made seven altars for the cathedral church of Bois le Duc, some hundred statues and different works of art from which have been preserved to this day. The main altar of the church of Santa Ana was awarded at the sacred art exhibition held in Rome in 1870 during the First Vatican Council convened by Pope Pius IX and was located in the church of Scheveningen (near The Hague, in the Netherlands) due to the majesty of its style and design.

At the beginning of 1900, when the church in Scheveningen was renovated, the main altar, the communion rail, and the pulpit were donated to the mission in the Netherlands Antilles. Its initial destination was Willemstad in Curacao, but when the ship that was bringing the altar arrived in Aruba, they got the bad news that at this time they were going through some difficult days in Curacao since there were many people sick with diphtheria, so they decided to leave this magnificent work of gothic art in Aruba, reaching its destination in the Saint Anna Church of Noord.

Now, in addition to the main altar, there is something else that also captures the

Episode CXCVIII -198

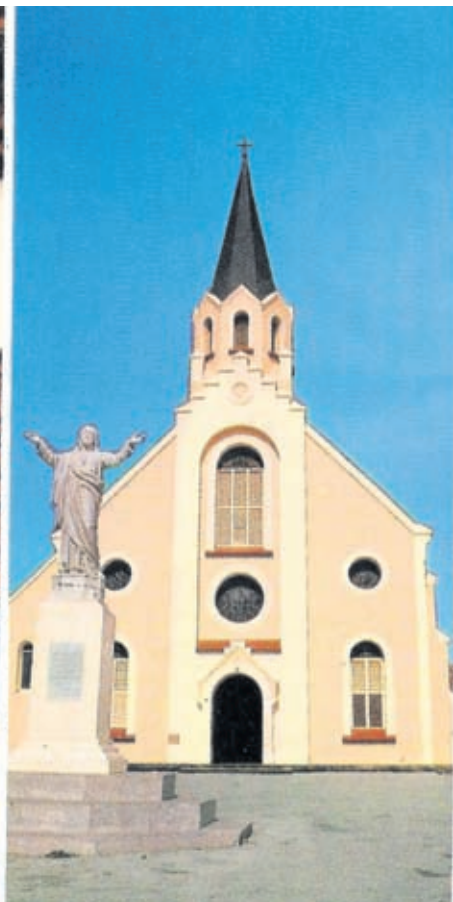


attention when visiting the Santa Ana church, which are the stained glass windows, the work of the German artist Wilhem Derix de Kevelaar, dating from 1932, while those of the semicircular windows were made by Heinrich Derix (the son of the first) in 1965 and represent the four Alto Vista -Noord district- prosecutors (episode 136, "Alto Vista history") and were cast by Johan B. Schmeitz. Leaving the church, you can see the priest's house on the right, built in 1877, one of the oldest houses on the island that is still in use.

Intrigued by Aruba's origins and its cultural heritage? Do something outside of the tourist grid. Become one of the exclusive visitors of Etnia Nativa, a private residential encounter set up where you will be able to touch and be touched by authentic Aruba heritage, a spectacle of native art, archaic as well as archaeological artifacts, lithic tools, colonial furniture, and other items of the island's bygone era. Get inside a recycled environment full of peace, relaxation, knowledge, and information.

Etnia Nativa is, since 1994, the home of Anthony, our acclaimed columnist, artist craftsman, and island Piache, who guides and lectures you through his resplendent private collection. This native museum/home is the only place that recreates and introduces you to an authentic glimpse into Aruba's cultural heritage. Something completely different for a change—a contemporary Native Aruba experience!

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Sea turtle conservation by Turtugaruba Foundation

ORANJESTAD — Turtugaruba was founded on September 3rd, 2003 by a group of enthusiastic volunteers. Ten years earlier, in 1993, a Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan (STRAP) was introduced in Aruba and the rest of the Caribbean as an initiative of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). Tom Barmes, who was working at DLVV (Department of Agriculture, Husbandry and Fishery) was one of the writers of the STRAP for Aruba, together with Karen Eckert, director of WIDECAST (Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network). This is how sea turtle conservation started on the island following a plan that is still complied with today.



Tom formed a group of volunteers around him, because nature does not know office hours, like an organization such as DLVV. This group of volunteers used the name Widecast Aruba and today there are still a few of them active. They first started protecting the Leatherback Sea Turtle nests on Palm Beach and Eagle Beach. This group also investigated which other species of sea turtles use Aruba as their nesting habitat and which beaches are used by them. For a period of 25 years a study

has been conducted in which every early morning the beach was being monitored in which now there is a good overview of sea turtle nesting activities.

There are 4 different sea turtle species that visit Aruba to lay their eggs, each with their own specific season:

- Leatherback Sea Turtle - Lederschildpad - Driekiel (March – September)
- Loggerhead Sea Turtle - Dikkopschildpad - Cawama (May – Sep-

tember)

- Hawksbill Sea Turtle - Karetschildpad - Caret (June – December)
- Green Turtle - Soepschildpad - Turtuga Blanco (July-November)

There also came a better understanding and overview of the biggest threats to the sea turtles existence in Aruba and how these problems should be tackled. Despite hard work, all those years, most problems have not really gone away, but luckily and thanks to the enormous efforts from the

volunteers, the sea turtles are still here. On Aruba the sea turtles are threatened with extinction by pollution, driving on dunes and beaches with quads and 4x4's and the loss of nesting beaches due to coastal development on behalf of tourism. Because coastal development comes with artificial light and artificial light is a mayor issue for sea turtles, mother turtle usually comes on shore at night looking for a dark beach to make her nest. However... a dark beach is hard to find here nowadays. Light causes stress and can result in her returning to the sea without laying her eggs. Artificial light causes disorientation for the baby sea turtles (hatchlings).

They crawl towards artificial light sources (like streetlights, hotel lights, etc.) and then they don't find the sea. In the 90's it was still a common occurrence to find a complete nest of about 70 hatchlings on the streets, dead, as cars drove over them. Thanks to their protection methods and a lot of time and effort, the volunteers of Turtugaruba have managed to get this under control. But for a sustainable solution there must be less light visible on the beaches and a strict regulation of it. Sea turtles simply need dark nesting beaches

for their survival. It is clear that even more coastal development would not make the situation better for the sea turtles. Again, more hotel rooms? And even busier beaches? These are choices Aruba has to make. Do we want to leave a place for the sea turtles? Not only Aruba, but the entire world needs sea turtles! Sea turtles play a vital role in keeping our oceans healthy.

The Green Turtle, for example, keeps the sea grasses on the bottom of the sea short and therefore a healthy place for many fish to deposit their eggs. The Leatherback, the largest turtle of the world, eats mainly jellyfish and helps maintain the balance between jellyfish and plankton. Despite the threats that exist on Aruba, the turtles still keep coming. That's why today Turtugaruba is especially proud of the volunteers and the many people and organizations of our community that carry a warm place in their hearts for the sea turtles. All four species are active now, which means all hands on deck in the field for us, the volunteers. We strive to keep the sea turtles, our oldest 'repeat guests', always coming back to Aruba and get the chance to reproduce here. □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

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David 38 Sacred

6 Location song

10 Chris 39 Bumbling

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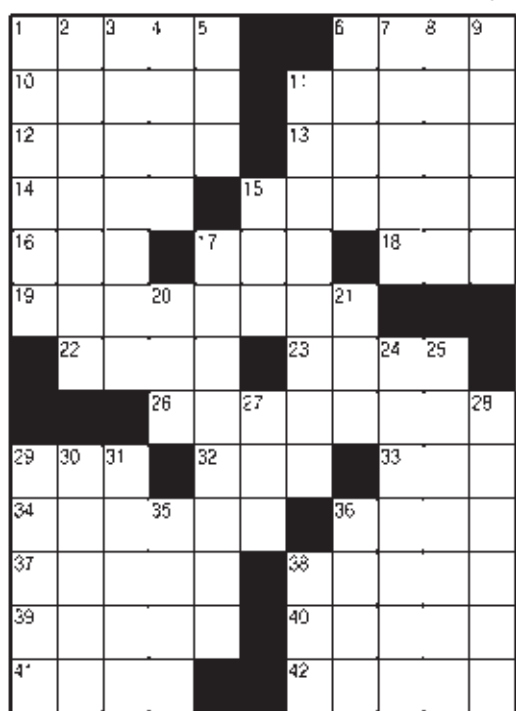
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Yesterday's answer

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shape 24 Extremist 35 Openings
6 Mix up 25 It may 36 TV
7 Some start explorer
shirts with "E" 38 Atlas page



3-22

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-22 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

RGL XVTJ QSZDLIR H MVXN

EVJRGHVP EZXS HQ FJQLTK.

EVC H CXV'R MVXN RGER

RXX ITLEBTJ. — NHTTHEF

QGERVLB

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: IF WE DON'T CHASE THINGS, SOMETIMES THE THINGS FOLLOWING US CAN CATCH UP. — L.M. MONTGOMERY

Mackenzie Scott sets new 'open call' to donate \$250M

By GLENN GAMBOA
AP Business Writer

Mackenzie Scott is launching a \$250 million "open call" for community-focused nonprofits that the billionaire philanthropist can fund.

Through her organization Yield Giving, Scott plans to make unrestricted \$1 million donations to 250 nonprofits selected in the process, which she calls a "new pathway to support for organizations making positive change in their communities." To apply, the nonprofits must have annual operating budgets larger than \$1 million, but less than \$5 million for at least two of the past five years. "Teams on the front lines of challenges have insights no one else can offer," Scott said in a statement. "So there are three big headlines here in my heart: Community changemakers can nominate themselves. Community changemakers get feedback from their peers. Community changemakers have a powerful role in funding decisions." □

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Review: John Wick gets even more stylish in fourth episode

By **MARK KENNEDY**

AP Entertainment Writer

A trip to Paris should be on everyone's bucket list, even John Wick. The Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, the Louvre — what better way to refresh your soul, even as you kick everyone else's bucket?

The un-retired assassin does indeed dive into the City of Lights in the inventive and thrilling "John Wick: Chapter 4" a sequel which elevates and expands the franchise. The fourth installment is more stylish, more elegant and more bonkers — kind of like Paris itself.

When we last saw Wick, he was half dead in the gutter after being shot and tumbling several stories off the Hotel Continental in New York. He was on the blacklist with a \$14 million price on his head. (Inflation has even hit this franchise: The bounty swells to \$40 million by the end of part four.)

Wick, as always played with monosyllabic and brooding intensity by Keanu Reeves, leaves his customary trail of death, but there's a shift here. So often the prey in the previous movies, Wick is on the offense in the fourth, taking his demands directly to The High Table, the group of shadowy crime lords that keep order.

This time, the Table's sadistic frontman is a dandy called the Marquis, played with coiled menace by Bill Skarsgård, who spouts things like: "Second chanc-



This image released by Lionsgate shows Keanu Reeves as John Wick in a scene from "John Wick 4." Associated Press

es are the refuge of men who fail." But he's a secret coward, so feel free to boo loudly.

The nine-fingered Wick wants to end his nightmare, naturally, by killing everyone. His too-cool frenemy, Ian McShane's Winston, challenges him to think differently: "Have you learned nothing?" he asks the man who, to be honest, he shot in the last movie. "You'll run out of bullets before they run out of heads."

Returning writer Shay Hatten, along with co-writer Michael Finch, have come up with a possible solution for Wick: Win an old-fashioned duel with the Marquis. Win and be free, lose and be buried.

Not so fast, of course. Along the way, Wick must somehow handle the blind martial arts master Caine, played by Donnie Yen, bringing humor and verve to a fighter who is tasked with either slaying his one-time friend or have his daughter killed.

There's also Killa, a jumbo-sized card shark played by martial arts star Scott Adkins, and The Tracker, a very talented bounty hunter played by Shamier Anderson. Don't forget a swarm of Paris-based amateur bounty-hunters and armored ninjas who seem as plentiful as the city's baguettes.

All the touches you expect from a Wick flick are here —

a cool dog, hand-to-hand combat amid glass display cases, candles and Christian iconography, galloping horses, the screech of metal swords and a new way to hurt someone, in this case, a single playing card. We visit Germany, Japan and end in France, even going to a disused subway platform.

Returning director Chad Stahelski loves combining neon with gloom and now has the budget to rent out space in the Louvre. Of the 14 action sequences — yes, 14 — a few are truly mind-blowing, like a fight in the middle of the traffic circle around the Arc de Triomphe and a drone capturing a complicated set piece in

a building involving what is being called a dragon's breath shotgun. Repeating that last bit: dragon's breath shotgun.

If there was a bit of a slog through would-be assassins in "John Wick: Chapter 3 — Parabellum" — you know, shoot, stab, repeat — there is none here. One sequence on a set of outdoor stairs in Paris is almost riotously funny as knives and guns blast away, while the filmmakers add water and fire to a nightclub rave scene that puts clueless dancers next to axe-throwing murderers.

A shout-out to costume designer Paco Delgado, who has outfitted the baddie gunmen in light-colored three-piece suits and combat boots, and the executive baddies in fitted elegance with extravagant cravat-style ties. One of the film's saddest parts is saying goodbye to Lance Reddick, who played Continental Hotel concierge Charon and died on the eve of the movie's debut. How does this all end? Actually, on something of a deflating note. Earlier in the film, Wick's Japan-based friend Shimazu — played awesomely by Hiroyuki Sanada — had asked a question that eternally hangs over this franchise: "Have you given any thought to how this ends?" This chapter ends in death, of course. But that's also how it lives. □



This cover image released by Columbia Records shows "Memento Mori" by Depeche Mode.

Associated Press

Review: Depeche Mode face down the abyss in 'Memento Mori'

By **CRISTINA JALERU**
The Associated Press

"Memento Mori" by Depeche Mode (Columbia Records) And then there were only two.

Depeche Mode have always been a genre unto itself: a vibe, a sort of feedback loop that is timeless yet nostalgic, dark, edgy, a little too dark sometimes but always so cool.

Their 15th studio album titled "Memento Mori" (Latin for "remember you will die") feels both like a tribute to founding member and key-

boardist Andy Fletcher who died in May 2022 and left them a duo (Dave Gahan and Martin Gore) and a mission statement of their music. The 12 tracks are fully Depeche, fully intoxicating in sound, artistically evocative and sometimes puzzling (like the compelling but strange "Caroline's Monkey"). The music is staring lovingly into the abyss and asking it to love it back; death is always hovering on the periphery of the sound, a grunge, industrial, rainy sound also filled with a strange kindness.

"Soul with Me" is an incredible ballad where Gahan's voice changes to an unrecognizable pitch, while "Before We Drown" is an electro sexy tune, while "My Cosmos Is Mine" has a dramatic tempo to it that works.

"Ghost Again" hooks you with its deep fry bass and "People are Good" engages the aural with an unusual vibrato.

Depeche Mode might be facing their own mortality but their power as musicians stretches into infinity. □

College hoops staffs specialize to meet roster, NIL demands

By AARON BEARD
AP Basketball Writer

Kelvin Sampson has been around college basketball long enough to remember when preseason practices started in October following a true offseason, teams remained largely intact for multiple seasons and players weren't permitted to pursue endorsement deals. It might as well be a different planet now.

The way Houston's coach sees it, the top-tier programs must evolve to better manage recruiting, the transfer portal and roster demands, and athlete compensation deals.

"Absolutely, you have to," the 67-year-old Sampson said as March Madness headed to Sweet 16 weekend. "To (manage) those kinds of things, you've got to have specialization on your staff."

That means bolstering support staffs, much like how analysts and quality control staffers have become common across college football. Specialized roles for recruiting, scouting or analytics. Adding special assistants to aid head coaches, general managers to navigate the new era of players profiting from use of their name, image and likeness (NIL), even creative-content staffers to pump out videos or social media to promote the program's brand.

If anything, staffs are starting to resemble their counterparts in the pros.

"I've got three — I guess there are four of them now



Houston coach Kelvin reacts to a foul call during the second half of an NCAA college basketball game against Central Florida Saturday, Dec. 31, 2022, in Houston.

Associated Press

— former (graduate assistants) and managers that work in the front office at the (NBA's) Phoenix Suns," Kansas State first-year coach Jerome Tang said before clinching a Sweet 16 appearance. "Those guys told me that the four guys that are on the bench across the country are probably the same. It's the next level that separates you."

March Madness resumes Thursday, and there are examples of these increasingly specialized staffs on teams still chasing a national title.

Six teams — Houston, Xavier, Texas, Arkansas, San Diego State and Florida Atlantic — have an assistant or special assistant to the head coach, often designed as catch-all helpers who shoulder administrative duties while potential-

ly taking on tasks such as breaking down film. Tang and Michigan State's Tom Izzo each has a chief of staff.

Top overall seed Alabama has a director of scouting and analytics. Fellow Southeastern Conference team Tennessee has someone overseeing analytics. Titles vary. The goal doesn't. "I have people on my staff in charge of something with one of our kids 24 hours a day," Sampson said. "And it's all built around relationships. You know, these kids can transfer today and not even have to tell the coach. They can just go to the compliance office. ... So in order to combat those kinds of things, it's more and more important that you're involved in their daily lives."

Kevin Sutton joined Kansas State's staff as director

of strategies, working with game plans, scouting and film review. He is part of a broader effort to deal with roster management in the portal era, when rosters change dramatically from one year to the next.

"It's the college version of free agency and it's something that goes on all the time and it continues to grow on a daily basis," Sutton said. "We have to retain our players. ... So having a larger staff to be able to be involved in the current players' lives and then have an eye on what's happening outside of your program in terms of the transfer portal." Juggling that with the core goal — winning games — isn't easy, either.

For Arkansas coach Eric Musselman, that meant stopping game-prep work last year for recruiting

Zooms on the eve of beating No. 1 overall seed Gonzaga to reach a second straight regional final.

"I think it was five, maybe four (Zooms), before we played Gonzaga the night before, up until maybe 11:15, 11:30 at night doing Zooms when you are trying to make an Elite Eight, playing in a Sweet 16 game," he said.

Musselman, whose team is fresh off beating 1-seed and reigning national champion Kansas, has a 14-person support staff beyond his three assistants and the goal of being "at the forefront of analytics."

That includes a director of internal operations, director of scouting, recruiting coordinator, assistant director of recruiting and scouting, and seven graduate assistants.

Consider it the trickle-down of NBA influence into college ranks.

"Players watch the NBA guys, they want to be like them, play like them, be in an offense like them," said Baylor coach Scott Drew, whose team reached the tournament's second round. "Then you look at staffs. And as universities try to keep up and provide the best for their student-athletes, then you're getting into analytics. You're getting into nutrition. You're getting into player development."

That has included the very-pro-sounding role of GM, arriving at Duke and DePaul as an NIL resource to players. □

NBA suspends Grizzlies' Dillon Brooks for 18th technical

NEW YORK (AP) — The NBA has suspended Memphis Grizzlies forward Dillon Brooks for one game without pay for his 18th technical foul this season.

Joe Dumars, the league's executive vice president and head of basketball operations, announced the suspension Tuesday. Brooks also was suspended

for a loss to the Clippers on March 5 after receiving his 16th technical foul in a loss to Denver on March 3. Brooks earned his latest suspension Monday night with 7:26 left in the third quarter of the Grizzlies' 112-108 win over Dallas. He dunked, and then danced his way back down the court.

He will sit out Wednesday night's game against Houston and risks another one-game suspension if he picks up two more technical fouls.

Brooks also was fined \$35,000 by the NBA last week for shoving a camera person while chasing a loose ball during a loss in Miami. □



Memphis Grizzlies forward Dillon Brooks (24) gestures toward Dallas Mavericks players in the second half of an NBA basketball game Monday, March 20, 2023, in Memphis, Tenn.

Associated Press

Last Match Play, last chance for Kuchar at Tiger's record

By **DOUG FERGUSON**

AP Golf Writer

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Matt Kuchar has a chance to break at least one record belonging to Tiger Woods, and the Dell Technologies Match Play will be his last chance.

That's because this is the last edition of the Match Play. And for starters, Kuchar feels lucky just to be part of the 64-man field at Austin Country Club.

At stake: He needs to win three matches to set the record for most matches won in a tournament that dates to 1999. Kuchar is guaranteed three matches, starting Wednesday, in the group format.

Kuchar has reached the Final Four four times, winning the championship in 2013, losing to Kevin Kisner in 2019 and twice losing in the semifinals. His career mark is 34-11-4. Woods, the only three-time winner of Match Play, has a 36-12 mark.

"This is an event I love, an event that's been really good to me," Kuchar said Tuesday as he ducked inside from a steady drizzle. "It's something I had my eye on and had to do some asking around, 'Hey, how do I look to get in this thing?' I'm awfully excited it worked out."

Match Play was the most unique of the World Golf Championships when the series began in 1999, and it



Rory McIlroy, of Northern Ireland, hits from the second tee during a practice round for the Dell Technologies Match Play Championship golf tournament in Austin, Texas, Tuesday, March 21, 2023.

Associated Press

was the last of them to go. The WGC at Firestone moved to Memphis, Tennessee, in 2019 and then was converted two years later to a FedEx Cup play-off event.

The WGC that initially alternated between the U.S. and Europe moved to Doral (and absorbed a regular PGA Tour event), and then headed to Mexico City when a sponsor could not be found for the Donald Trump-owned course, and then was shut down by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The HSBC Champions in Shanghai hasn't been

played since 2019 due to the pandemic, and the China Golf Association hasn't allowed it to resume. PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan doesn't expect that event to continue with the move toward so many elevated events in the new schedule.

And now the Dell Match Play is done after this year, a blow for fans who enjoy the most unpredictable nature of 18-hole matches and for Austin, which will be without the highest level of golf.

It ends with a 64-man field that had to dip down to

No. 77 in the world ranking to fill the field, and another sign of these divisive times in golf.

That means 11 players would not be in Austin if not for LIV Golf, including Kuchar.

"I guess I'm grateful for LIV for a lot of things," Kuchar said with a laugh, a reference to the \$20 million purse this week, which was part of the PGA Tour's response to the Saudi-funded threat of LIV.

Kuchar can break Woods' record by sweeping his three matches in group play, but that's never easy

— no matter the opponents. Kuchar is the No. 59 seed and faces Viktor Hovland, Chris Kirk and Si Woo Kim — all of whom have won tournaments in the last four months.

"Good form is the most important thing to success," he said.

Scottie Scheffler has a little of both. The No. 1 player in the world already has two wins this year, the most recent two weeks ago at The Players Championship. Scheffler made his debut in the Match Play in 2021 by reaching the championship match and losing to Billy Horschel, and then he won the Match Play last year over Kisner.

Woods is the only player to have won Match Play in consecutive years.

"Match play is a little bit different," Scheffler said. "But I think the guys playing the best golf do what they have to do to win the match and win the tournament and I think it's a good format. It's a little funky, but a change of pace."

Scheffler won last year as the No. 5 seed, and only three top seeds in the previous 23 years have won the Match Play — Rory McIlroy in 2015, Dustin Johnson in 2017 and Woods three times (2003, 2004 and 2008). Two players in his group, Tom Kim and Davis Riley, are playing for the first time. □



Arsenal's Granit Xhaka celebrates their victory at the English Premier League soccer match between Arsenal and Crystal Palace at Emirates stadium in London, Sunday, March 19, 2023.

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Arsenal will play Major League Soccer's All-Stars at Audi Field

in Washington, D.C., on July 19, the first European opponent in the game since be-

Arsenal in MLS All-Star Game at Washington, DC, on July 19

fore the coronavirus pandemic.

The Gunners, pursuing their first Premier League title since 2004, also were the All-Star opponent in 2016. They won 2-1 at Avaya Stadium in San Jose, California, on goals by Joel Campbell and Chuba Akpom. Didier Drogba, then playing for Montreal, scored for MLS.

MLS announced Tuesday it was returning to its most-used All-Star format.

The league began having its top players face a European opponent in 2005,

then announced in November 2019 that it was changing to its All-Stars against those of Liga MX. The 2020 match in Los Angeles was canceled because of the pandemic, but the format was used the following two years, with MLS winning on penalty kicks in Los Angeles in 2021 and 2-1 last year at St. Paul, Minnesota. Arsenal will become the third European club to appear in two MLS All-Star Games after Manchester United (2010 and '11) and Chelsea (2006 and '12). The previous Euro-

pean opponent was Atlético Madrid, which won 3-0 in 2019 at Orlando, Florida. The Gunners have an eight-point lead over defending champion Manchester City in the Premier League. Arsenal has nine games remaining and City has 10.

MLS's All-Star Game had an East vs. West format in 1996 and '97, from 1999-2001 and in 2004. Its American players met its international players in 1998, and MLS All-Stars played the U.S. national team in 2002 and Mexico's Chivas in 2003. □